

**NASS**

# New England Agricultural Statistics Service

a field office of the National Agricultural Statistics Service  
United States Department of Agriculture

22 Bridge St., Third Floor

PO Box 1444

Concord, NH 03302

Aubrey R. Davis, Director

www.usda.gov/nass

603-224-9639

Fax: 603-225-1434

nass-nh@nass.usda.gov



## Maine Wild Blueberries

### July 2003

July 30, 2003

**A special "THANK YOU" goes to approximately 400 Maine Wild Blueberry growers and processors who have helped us by completing the wild blueberry survey during July.**

### AVERAGE CROP EXPECTED

Maine's 2003 wild (lowbush) blueberry crop is expected to total 80.0 million pounds, based on grower reported condition of the crop through mid-July. This forecasted production would be an increase of 28 percent from last year's output of 62.4 million pounds, and is six percent above 2001 final production.

Many growers reported that crop prospects are close to average this year although many expressed concern about a lack of moisture. Sufficient rain from mid-July until harvest would ensure an average or better crop.

Most growers detected minimal winter kill on the 2003 wild blueberry crop due to adequate snow cover throughout the winter. Weather was cool and rainy during the spring of 2003, causing poor, spotty pollination in many areas. Mummy berry disease is prevalent for the second consecutive year. Weeds and fruit flies, among other pests, are also bothersome this season.

Showers near the end of July improved crop quality as growers prepared for harvest.

### WILD BLUEBERRIES: Production and Value, 1993 - 2003

STATE & YEAR	Total Production	All Price per Pound <sup>1/</sup>	Total Value of Production	Fresh Blueberries <sup>2/</sup>			Blueberries for Processing		
				Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production	Production	Price per Pound	Value of Production
	1,000 Pounds	Cents	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Pounds	Dollars	1,000 Dollars	1,000 Pounds	Cents	1,000 Dollars
<b>Maine</b>									
1993	64,562	28	17,979	350	--	--	64,212	28	17,979
1994	59,495	30	17,744	350	--	--	59,145	30	17,744
1995	65,944	32	21,004	305	--	--	65,639	32	21,004
1996	59,198	57	33,590	268	--	--	58,930	57	33,590
1997	73,816	43	31,622	276	--	--	73,540	43	31,622
1998	62,981	46	29,166	360	1.00	360	62,621	46	28,806
1999	66,102	51	33,889	300	1.10	330	65,802	51	33,559
2000	110,990	40	44,732	420	1.20	504	110,570	40	44,228
2001	75,200	31	22,945	350	1.40	490	74,850	30	22,455
2002	62,400	29	17,860	400	1.25	500	62,000	28	17,360
2003 <sup>3/</sup>	80,000	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

<sup>1/</sup> All Price per Pound and Total Value of Production for 1993 - 1997 do not include fresh market blueberries.

<sup>2/</sup> Fresh Blueberry Price per Pound and Value of Production are not available before 1998.

<sup>3/</sup> Current year production forecast is based on growers' assessments as of mid-July.

### BLUEBERRY COMMENTS 2003 BY COUNTY, AS REPORTED ON THE GROWER SURVEY

**CUMBERLAND, KENNEBEC, OXFORD:** Drought, two years - no crop. Wet, cold spring. Late May - frost. Increases in real estate taxes are greater than return from crop. Wild turkeys are a major problem - they have stripped blueberries for the 2nd year in a row. Cold and rainy pollination weather. Good moisture. Intrusive red bunch berries. Hope for an average crop. No winter damage. Average size berries. Bad pollination weather. Average bloom and set. Drought from last year hurt places on this year's crop near ledges and high places. Wet weather this spring may cause insect problems. Need more rain to prevent drought. Not much winter damage - enough snow. Very cold and rainy during pollination - bees could not work well. Minor winter damage. Not enough pollination. I expect an average to light crop. Very little winter kill, crop should be above average if we get some rain. Looks like a small crop. Hot and dry last summer did not make many fruit buds. Cool, wet pollination weather. Some blossom blight. **HANCOCK:** The set was light and it has been dry, but with showers in the past few days, things may turn out okay. No disease or insect problems. Short growth from last year's drought. No winter damage. Good pollination despite cold, wet weather. Need rain from now until harvest. Rainy, damp, foggy during pollination. Too dry. Winter damage above normal. No noticeable insect problems out of the ordinary. Things don't look good. Disease - spotty, no good pollination. Long, cold winter, good snow cover. Very wet, cold spring. Fair blossom set. Weather not good for

bees to work. Blossom blight because of a very wet spring, lack of rain - I expect a less than average. Poor spring. Roughly 25 percent of the acreage suffered winter damage. So far, good quality berries and good moisture. Some blossom blight and mummy berry present. General prospects appear to be below average. Good pollination despite cool spring. Poor pollination, good winter cover. The prospects for a good year are very poor due to all the Canadian berries coming into this country. Blueberries are diseased and are doing poor this year. Lots of blight of all sorts. Much winter damage. Need rain. Dry last year and not much rain in June. Snow cover from December until mid-April. Very little winter damage - most damage done by kids on dirt bikes and 4-wheelers. Too much rain during blossoming - bees stayed in the hive. Smaller crop expected because of wet spring. It has been dry - we need rain to plump up the berries. Too wet in the spring, too dry now. Drought for two years, need rain this year. Will have a light crop. Cold spring. Due to lack of moisture this and previous two seasons and also winter damage, there aren't enough berries to make it feasible to harvest. The last two weeks of no rain dried berries out. Spring frost hurt and so did the wet conditions. Only 1/3 ripe as of 7/20/03, good moisture and little disease. Fields look good but we need rain. A wet, cool spring contributed to a late bloom with moderate blight and possible pollination problems. Some clones are heavy set and others are very light. With this hot, dry spell we are having now, rainfall will be critical.

**KNOX:** Due to rain, pollination not good. Set is really spotty. Very little winter injury, few insect and disease problems. 2003 crop looks "patchy," mostly because of dry weather in August and September of 2002. No winter kill, crop is 1 week late due to pollination being 2 weeks late. Due to damp weather, blueberry fruit fly is prevalent, especially near wooded areas. Poor pollinating weather. Probably less than ideal rain from now until harvest. Slight winter damage, no disease to speak of, fair amount of damage from last year's drought. We need rain. We expect an average crop this year. Had a lot of mummy berry due to wet weather this spring. Winter damage where snow blew off. Land is too dry - need lots of rain badly. Moderate amount of mummy berry. Large number of insects due to good snow cover. Weather during pollination was no good. Should have good crop if we get rain. Bad weather during bloom. Poor spring - bad weather when bees were working. Very cold for bees. We will not be able to operate at 25 cents a pound. No damage. So far, no flies or insects. Pollination was not as good as in previous years because of weather. Hope for a similar yield as in 2001. No winter damage. Below average moisture. Mummy berry above average. It has been very dry. Unless we get a good spell of rain, the berries won't amount to much. We've had a problem with turkeys eating the berries. Uneven pollination. Not too optimistic. Cold spring, not very good pollination, had some winter kill. Adequate moisture. Had to spray for fruit flies. Good snow cover. Sprayed for blight. Little winter injury. Little disease or insects. Looks good. **LINCOLN:** Extra bees needed for pollination. Cold, damp spring. Wild turkeys continue to be local problem - no state controls. Some patches of mummy berry. Ground is somewhat drier than usual. Poor pollination due to weather. Bug damage on non-bearing land. Heavy grasses and bunch berry. A lot of pin heads. Need a good rain. Fair looking crop, too much rain early in the year. Grass problems. Turkeys are eating the blueberries. Only light showers. Need more rain. Vetch and bunch berry creeping in. No winter problems. Last year's dry weather and the rain this spring has had an effect on the crop. Pollination was late due to rain. Lots of mummy berry and now turkeys. **PENOBSCOT, PISCATAQUIS, WALDO:** Too much rain in spring, lacking in summer. Late crop this year. Some blight and mummy berry. Bad pollination this year. Good bloom. Rain made pollination difficult. Late frost took some of the blossom - crop will be lighter. The only thing wrong is the price we get per pound. Winter kill on tops of some vines. Some mummy berry. Not too many thrip. Should have a good crop if moisture remains OK and we're able to keep the wild turkeys and other pests out. Winter damage is minimal. The quality of berries is good. Moisture was heavy during bloom. Temperature during bloom was low. Bees did not pollinate. Will expect crop to be average or below for this year. Should be an average harvest. Good snow cover. No damage observed. Some patches of red leaf. Looks like a good crop if we can get moisture and not too much heat. Surprisingly little damage. Don't know about moisture. Berries look exceptionally good. Pollination was excellent - wild pollinators and bumble bees. Some winter damage. Cold spring. Wet during blossom. **WASHINGTON:** Poor pollination, prices so low can't afford to fertilize. Looks like a good year, although price is not good. Tremendous weed problem and poor pollination. Some winter damage. Blossom blight above average. Honey bees unable to work, berries

small now, but rains would make better crop. General prospects poor with costs greater than selling price of berries. Winter kill was quite heavy due to severe winter. Pollination was light due to wet conditions. Not much disease. No insects yet. Not too much winter damage. Quality of berries good. Projections are for an average crop. Very wet spring - more disease, mummy berry. Biggest problem - very poor price. Good snow cover, spring rain for moisture. Good bloom. Moisture is insufficient. Fair prospects. Berries have not sized up yet due to cold spring - they are running late. Expect low production this year. Terrible weather for bloom time, some blight due to too much rain. Weather hurt fruit set. Everything looks good at this time. The weather is too dry, that's why the berries are so small. During pollination it was too damp and foggy. Vetch and grass problems. Due to poor market, will not harvest any more berries until something changes. The bloom time was really wet and cool, 50 to 60% of the time was not good for pollination. The rain has been adequate along the coast. Some mummy berry. Looks like an average year. Excessive winter damage in places. Too cold during pollination - no rain since pollination. Some winter injury - blossom blight. Little winter damage. A bit weedy. Average prospects. Some winter damage on lots where extra fertilizer applied in 2002. Pollination was less than hoped for. Weather not conducive to good pollination and bees removed before blossoms all pollinated. Had some bear damage which affected pollination. Quality looks good. Damage from too much rain in spring - cold, wet weather. Berries are in very good shape with very few ripe as all is late. Disease is spotty and minimal. Insect problems are noticeable and perhaps 1% loss due to this problem. Winter damage very light. Damage from drought last 2 years. Lack of pollination. Looking bad - dry, poor pollination, winter kill. Winter damage, quite a bit of blight. Our biggest problem now is lack of water. If we start getting some rain in the next month and soon, it should be a good year. In some areas lots of winter kill. Plenty of red leaf disease. Some insect damage. Berries look good. Not a lot of damage from winter kill, insects, or disease. Possible problem with moisture if the dry weather continues. General prospects at this time - fair. Good looking crop - heavy. We have a lot of red leaves. Too much disease. Had mummy berry problems due to wet spring, then had drought-like conditions. We need rain. Poor spring, too cold and too wet. No winter kill. Short blueberry bushes from little rain during growth. Spots of span worm damage from last summer. Poor spring, too cold and too wet. Some mummy berry, milk weed, ferns, and lots of grass. Heavy blight. Span worm on 2004 crop acreage. Not enough rain. Very late season, lots of rain during pollination. Concerned about set. Bushes wintered well. Expect good crop. No moisture as of July 7, otherwise normal. Despite a poor pollination season and some bear problems, the fruit set seems to be very heavy on many clones. Native pollinators are abundant. Seem to have escaped blight damage. Adequate rain should produce an above average crop. Some thrip. No insect problems that I know of. A lousy wet extended spring season. Many fields were grassy, full of sedges and trashy weed growth because growers were unable or unwilling to spend for pesticides. Need rain bad. Crop behind schedule due to very rainy spring. Too much rain during blossom caused light set, little bee activity. Weeds and disease about normal.

The wild blueberry estimating program is funded through a cooperative agreement with the Maine Department of Agriculture as a service to growers and others in the industry. The next Maine Wild Blueberry report will be published and available on the Internet at <http://www.nass.usda.gov/nh/> in late January 2004. It will contain the final production statistics for the 2003 crop as collected by the Maine Department of Agriculture.

**AUBREY R. DAVIS, Director**

**JOE SAMSON, Deputy Director**

**AGRICULTURAL STATISTICIANS:** Emily McAllister, Robin Helrich

PERMIT NO. G-38  
USDA  
POSTAGE & FEES PAID  
FIRST CLASS  
PRESORTED

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE  
POST OFFICE BOX 1444  
CONCORD NH 03302-1444